

R 160639Z JAN 09
FM AMCONSUL LAHORE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3877
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMCONSUL LAHORE

UNCLAS LAHORE 000006

DS/OSAC, DS/IP/SCA, RSO ISLAMABAD

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: AMGT APER ASEC

SUBJECT: LAHORE ANNUAL OVERSEAS SECURITY ADVISORY COUNCIL (OSAC)
CRIME AND SAFETY REPORTS

REF: 08 STATE 132056

11. Overall Crime and Safety Situation:

(U) Due to on-going concerns about the possibility of terrorist activity directed against American citizens and interests, the Department of State continues to advise U.S. citizens to defer non-essential travel to Pakistan. Family members of official Americans assigned to the Embassy in Islamabad and to the three consulates in Pakistan were ordered to leave the country in March 2002 and have not been allowed to return. U.S. Consulate Peshawar instituted a drawdown of non-essential personnel in November 2008.

(U) Continued U.S. military action in Afghanistan and Iraq and ongoing Government of Pakistan efforts to curb an extremist insurgency have all contributed to increased Anti-American sentiment in Pakistan. Operations by the Pakistani military against insurgents along the Afghan-Pakistani border have resulted in a backlash of terrorist actions directed against President Asif Ali Zardari's government and its police force. As these operations continue it is expected that reprisals will increase in kind. Continued reporting from an array of sources suggests numerous non-specific threats stemming from the remnants of the Taliban, splinter cells of Al-Qaida, and militants sympathetic to their cause.

(U) Overall criminal activity in Lahore increased this past calendar year. There are occasional reports from the American community at large of residential break-ins. U.S. Embassy personnel have on a few occasions reported that while out in town, local individuals have made anti-American slurs to them, though these incidents have yet to turn violent. Lahore is a city under development with a population of one and a half million. As the city grows in size and population, so does the crime rate. As the Pakistani economy continues to worsen and the shortage of energy, fuel and food grows, it is anticipated that the rate of crime will increase across the country.

(SBU) The roads in Lahore and between major cities are paved and adequate. However, in outlying areas the roads may be unpaved. There have been vehicle accidents involving U.S. Consulate personnel. This is due to Americans' inexperience of driving on the left side of the road, poorly trained and unskilled local drivers as well as local conditions such as pedestrians walking in the road without looking for oncoming traffic. Driving at night outside the city is not safe due to the large number of individuals, carts, and cattle that travel along the unlit roads.

12. Political Violence:

(U) Over the past 30 years there has been a history of political violence in Pakistan of targeting U.S. and Western interests as well as sectarian violence. There have been attacks against U.S. diplomatic personnel in Pakistan with the number increasing substantially in 2008. In 2002, a suicide bomber attacked a Protestant International Church in Islamabad a quarter of a mile from the U.S. Embassy killing five people. In December 2007, former Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, was killed during an attack in Rawalpindi sparking protests and riots across the country. In January 2008, a suicide bomber on a motorcycle

killed 26 (22 of whom were police officers) and injured 70 in Lahore. In February 2008, a motorcycle suicide bomber crashed into a Pakistani Armed Forces bus in Rawalpindi killing 11, injuring 45. In March 2008, a car bomb destroyed the FIA building in Lahore, killing 25. In March 2008, a satchel bomb detonated at a restaurant in Islamabad killing 1 and injuring 4 U.S. Embassy personnel. In June 2008, a suicide car bomb detonated at the Danish Embassy. In July 2008, an explosion at the Melody Market in Islamabad killed 20 and injured 40. In August 2008, over 50 people were killed when two suicide bombers detonated themselves simultaneously at a Pakistan weapons ordnance factory in Wah, near Rawalpindi. In August 2008, the U.S. Principal Officer in Peshawar was the target of an organized gun attack. In September 2008, over 50 people were killed, including 3 U.S. Embassy employees and over 250 were injured when a truck carrying over two thousand pounds of explosives was detonated outside the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad. In November 2008, an American working for a non-government organization was shot and killed in Peshawar.

(U) Lahore and the Punjab region have been comparatively safe for American citizens. No specific attacks against Americans have occurred in Lahore since 1979. However, within this region there are sectarian extremist, militant and designated foreign terrorist groups. Lahore and the Punjab remain at critical risk for terrorist attacks against American interests.

(U) There are significant threats to foreign interests in Pakistan, both from entities aligned with or sympathetic to the Taliban and Al-Qaida. All major western nations, including the United States, have issued travel advisories recommending against non-essential travel to Pakistan. Organized crime is only a factor as it relates to assisting terrorism with weapons and money and is not currently a direct criminal threat to Americans. Pakistan experiences regional, international and transnational terrorism threats and incidents.

(U) The issue of spontaneous demonstrations is an ongoing concern. Demonstrations can involve hundreds to many thousands of people. These demonstrations, while mostly peaceful, can turn violent with little or no warning. Another concern is the presence of extremist militants within the otherwise peaceful crowd of demonstrators. The police generally maintain reliable control of the crowds but on occasion, exuberance turns into violence resulting in batons and gas being used on the crowds when they become hostile and aggressive.

(SBU) Quite often on Friday afternoons, after prayers, there are demonstrations in Lahore. While these are normally peaceful, the police are out in force to control the situation because the potential for violence always exists.

13. Post-Specific Concerns:

(U) Pakistan is subject to earthquakes in the north and west regions of the country. A severe earthquake occurred on October 8, 2005 and is responsible for an estimated death toll of 87,000 persons. While the earthquake in 2005 was felt throughout most of Pakistan, the northern frontier and Kashmir regions of Pakistan sustained the greatest damage and loss of life. Substantial aftershocks and landslides have occurred in these areas. In October 2008, an earthquake occurred in the Balochistan Province causing death and destruction to the inhabitants of the area. Additionally, the Indus River is prone to flooding after heavy rains especially during the monsoon season of July and August.

(SBU) Industrial safety does not meet U.S. standards and pollution from raw sewage and industrial waste in the water and air is widespread. Air pollution, exacerbated in the winter months is at levels which may cause severe irritation and discomfort to individuals suffering from asthma or other respiratory disorders.

(SBU) Public transportation and driving in Pakistan can be extremely hazardous. Mission policy prohibits the use of public transportation and taxis by Mission personnel for a number of reasons. Vehicle maintenance, driver skills, and general lack of

road safety awareness by operators are all of concern. Although there have been no incidences of kidnapping of Americans or Westerners in Lahore, reporting from an array of sources has brought the threat onto the radar. The Mission reminds its personnel that it is paramount they continue their vigilance with regards to their surroundings to ensure their personal security.

14. Police Response:

(SBU) The police services in Pakistan are below the professional standards in the U.S. Lack of training, resources and low salaries of police officers contribute to the problem. Police response times in Lahore are usually within 15 minutes. The local police emergency numbers in Lahore is 15. If there is a language barrier, U.S. citizens can contact American Citizen Services at the U.S. Consulate Lahore via the main consulate switchboard at 92-42-603-4000. U.S. citizens may also use this number should they be arrested or have any interaction with the police which require assistance.

(SBU) The government of Pakistan has taken measures to curb the indigenous and transnational terrorist threat in Pakistan, to include banning Islamic fundamentalist literature and groups engaging in violent practices and rhetoric. Furthermore, the government of Pakistan has increased the security countermeasures and precautions taken for high-level Government officials, diplomats, and areas frequented by westerners.

15. Medical Emergencies:

(SBU) Emergency medical care in Pakistan is only available in major cities. Most Pakistani hospitals possess limited advanced life support equipment and are not up to US standards. Travelers should arrange for medical evacuation insurance personally or through their sponsoring agency prior to arriving in Pakistan. The following is the main hospital used by Consulate personnel:

Doctor's Hospital
152 - A-G-I Canal Bank, Jauhar Town
Phone: +92-42-530-2701 or +92-42-530-2709
Emergency Room: ext 3010 / 3090

Medical Evacuations:

(SBU) Air ambulance information is offered only as a guide and is not a recommendation of one service over another. Travelers are encouraged to research the availability of other air ambulance services and to make an informed choice based on individual needs and requirements.

AAA Air Ambulance Anywhere - United States
phone: 727-934-3999
fax: 727-937-0276
toll free: 1-800-327-196

AEA International Alarm Centers - Singapore
phone: 65-6338-7800
Fax: 65-6338-7611
internet: www.internationalsos.com

16. Travel precautions:

(SBU) Situational awareness and common sense are imperative for your personal safety. Avoid the appearance of carrying large sums of money, dress conservatively and do not draw attention to yourself. Avoid high-risk areas, crowds, and civil disturbances. When traveling, do not be time and place predictable. Varying your routes and departure/arrival times is vital to your safety.

If you feel that you are being followed or threatened in any way, go immediately to a safe place such as a government building that has police/security forces. Maintaining a low profile is important. Avoid wearing clothing that identifies you as an American.

(SBU) Whether you are driving or riding as a passenger, use extreme caution, expect the unexpected, and drive defensively. Road signs and traffic lights are often ignored. Traffic lights

at intersections are often out due to the power shortage. Proceed through these intersections with caution. Wear seat belts in front and rear seats, ensure doors are locked, and insist that a safe speed is maintained.

Fire-fighting resources are lacking and it is advised that if you stay in a high-rise hotel, try to keep to the lower floors.

(SBU) Many Americans and Westerners employ private security guard services for their residences and offices. They are less trained than those in the U.S. The following deficiencies are typical of such security services in Pakistan: poor quality of personnel attributed to low wages, little training, and limited supervision. What the contracting firm fails to supply in the way of equipment, the individual guard looks to the occupant to provide (i.e. heater, fan, water, and even supplemental income).

The major contract security guard services in Pakistan area: SMS, Phoenix Security Services, and Ashkari guards.

¶7. (U) For further information:

Embassy contact information:

Embassy main switchboard: 011-92-51-208-0000

Regional Security Office - Islamabad: 011-92-51-208-2203

Regional Security Office - Lahore: 011-92-42-603-4000

¶8. OSAC Country Council

(U) There is currently no formal OSAC in-country but the RSO briefs any and all U.S. and allied private sector personnel when requested. The establishment of a council for Lahore is currently in the planning stages.

HUNT